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SUBJECT: UN BRIEFS SECURITY COUNCIL ON GUINEA-BISSAU  
ASSASSINATIONS

REF: DAKAR 263

¶1. (SBU) At the request of Burkina Faso, the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) briefed the Security Council on March 3 on the events surrounding the assassinations of Guinea-Bissau President Joao Vieira and Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Tagme Na Wai. DPA Deputy Director for Africa Joh Epoko told the Council that Tagme was killed by an explosion at his headquarters late on March 1 and that Vieira was shot and killed early on March 2 by what a military spokesman called "unidentified citizens" who entered his private residence. Epoko said several military personnel had been injured in the two attacks but no private citizens.

¶2. (SBU) Epoko said Guinea-Bissau's institutions of government were continuing to function and there is no indication that the assassinations reflected an attempted coup d'etat. He said the Guinea-Bissau constitution calls for the president of the National Assembly, Raimundo Pereira, to assume the presidency in these circumstances on an interim basis and that presidential elections must be held within 60 days. He added that Prime Minister Carlos Gomes remained in office.

¶3. (SBU) Epoko said that Representative of the Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau Joseph Mutaboba is acting as coordinator of international community efforts in Guinea-Bissau and had been instructed by the SYG to coordinate closely with UNGOBIS, ECOWAS, the African Union, and the European Union.

¶4. (SBU) To Ambassador Rice's question about possible UN assistance for the elections to be scheduled, Epoko replied that a UN technical assessment mission (TAM) that had been scheduled to depart for Guinea-Bissau on March 10 would now be delayed and would consider the elections issue along with the Security Sector Reform efforts that were to have been the TAM's primary focus. To several questions about previous bad blood between Vieira and Tagme and a possible connection between their deaths, Epoko said only that investigation would focus on this possible link.

¶5. (SBU) Ugandan PermRep Rugunda said the Security Council, knowing of the problems between Vieira and Tagme, should have more actively monitored the situation. French PermRep Ripert emphasized that calm had returned to Guinea Bissau and that there appeared to be little prospect that these tragic events would trigger civil war.

¶6. (SBU) Burkina Faso drafted a Presidential Statement (PRST), which condemned the assassinations and called for the preservation of the constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. The PRST was adopted as UN Document S/2009/PRST/2. The text follows.

7.(U) Guinea Bissau PRST. Begin Text.

- The Security Council condemns in the strongest terms the assassinations of the President of Guinea-Bissau, Joao Bernardo Vieira, and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Tagme Na Waie, on 1 and 2 March 2009. It expresses its deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims, and to the people and Government of Guinea-Bissau.

- The Security Council calls on the Government of Guinea-Bissau to bring to justice those responsible for these violent acts. It calls upon the Government, the political leaders, the Armed Forces and people of Guinea-Bissau to remain calm, exercise restraint, maintain stability and constitutional order and respect the rule of law and the democratic process. It also urges all parties to resolve their disputes through political and peaceful means within the framework of its democratic institutions and opposes any attempt to change the government through unconstitutional means.

- The Security Council welcomes in this regard the statements condemning the incidents by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and other members of the international community, and calls on all to assist in preserving the constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau and to continue to support peacebuilding efforts in the country.

- The Security Council reaffirms its commitment to support the efforts of the Government and people of Guinea-Bissau to consolidate democratic institutions, peace and stability in that country.

- The Security Council shall remain seized of the

developments in Guinea-Bissau.

End text.

Rice